

FROSTED ELFIN

Callophrys irus

Order: Lepidoptera

Family: Lycaenidae

FNAI Ranks: G3/S1

U.S. Status: none

FL Status: none



Description: Small (22-36 mm) butterfly. Each hindwing has 1-3 short "tails" projecting backward. Underside of the wings, typically the only surface visible, mottled brown to tan overall with a jagged black-edged line about 2/3 toward the tip of each wing. Wings with varying amounts of silver (thus "frosted"), generally strongest on the hindwings. Upper surface of the wings brown, virtually patternless. Caterpillar pale lime-green with a light yellow stripe down each side.

Similar Species: Henry's elfin (*Callophrys henrici*) is smaller, darker brown, has less silver, and has longer "tails" on the hindwings. Eastern pine elfin (*Callophrys niphon*) is more strongly patterned with black markings. Brown elfin (*Callophrys augustinus*) is more orange-brown, has less silver, often with a purple sheen.

Habitat: Sandhill with its host plant, *Lupinus perennis*. It was found that low overall vegetative ground cover, some accumulated duff, some shade, and a lack of competing insects are important microhabitat conditions (Thom and Daniels 2017).

Seasonal Occurrence: Adults active late February through the end of April. Larvae and eggs are present from March to May.

Florida Distribution: Panhandle and northern peninsula. Possibly extirpated from Clay and Nassau counties.

Range-wide Distribution: Spotty distribution from New England to Texas.

Conservation Status: There are relatively few occurrences and this species is threatened by habitat loss and degradation. All but one occurrence is on conservation lands. It also relies on a single host plant and is vulnerable to fire during its larval stage. Possibly extirpated from Nassau and Clay counties.

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Protection and Management: Use prescribed fire every 3-5 years from June-September. Burns every 1-2 years and burns from February-May have proven to result in population declines (Jue et al. 2022). Winter burns are also detrimental (Heim 2021). Consider late instar relocations to historical sites, such as those in Clay and Nassau counties (Meyer and McElveen 2021).

References: Schweitzer et al. 2018



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